

The NRL Research Library and the
NRL Edison Chapter of Sigma Xi present:



The one hundred seventy fifth birthday of

James Clerk Maxwell

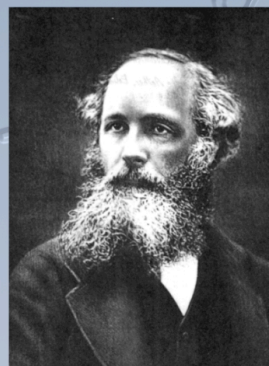
*Please join us for a celebration of the life and work of one
of science's most famous and influential practitioners.*

June 14, 2006 Bldg. 60 auditorium

1:45 Cookies and Coffee

2:00 Speaker: Prof. Francis Everitt

3:00 Cake and socializing



Prof. Everitt is a faculty member at Stanford University in the department of physics and an active member of the Gravity Probe-B program (Stanford, NASA). He is a noted scholar of Maxwell and has written four books about his science and life.

"Maxwell at 175"

James Clerk Maxwell was born in Edinburgh, Scotland on 13 June 1831. His dual last name has both social and intellectual importance, reflecting his double descent from two very different, leading Scottish families: the Clerks from near Edinburgh who go back to the 16th century and the Maxwells from the southwest border country who go back to the 12th.

When Einstein visited Cambridge in the 1920's, someone said to him "You stand on Newton's shoulders." His answer was "No, I stand on Maxwell's shoulders." This statement about relativity is correct: a similar one could also be correctly put for the background to quantum mechanics. These are the measures of Maxwell's intellectual greatness, the more impressive because he was cut off in 1879 at the age of 48.

This talk aims at three things. First, to describe some of Maxwell's achievements, both well-known (kinetic theory and the electromagnetic theory of light) and less well-known (the first color photograph and first paper on control theory). Second, to give a picture of Maxwell's intriguing dual education at Edinburgh and Cambridge, two very different universities and philosophies of education. And third, to give some impressions of Maxwell's thoughts beyond physics, which may be instructive even to us in a world very different from his.

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